

DDI #00428-85
24 January 1985

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

Chief, PMCD

THROUGH : Director of Personnel
Deputy Director for Intelligence *f*

FROM : DI Secretarial Task Force

SUBJECT : DI Recommendations and Comments on the 1984
PMCD Secretarial Study

1. This memorandum conveys the recommendations and additional comments of the Directorate of Intelligence on the 1984 PMCD Secretarial Study. The recommendations stand alone and, in effect, are an executive summary of the longer set of additional comments -- which can be named as informational.

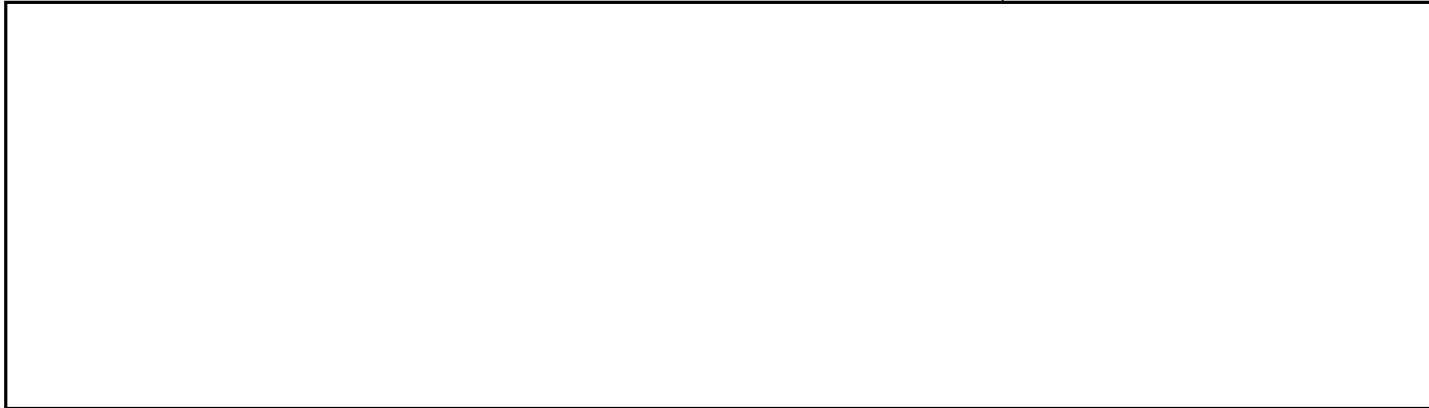
2. In order to come up with a rounded response, we conducted a directorate-wide review of the PMCD study, which included both managers and secretaries. We have the comments by DI components and will make those comments available to you if you desire to see them.

3. In our view, senior Agency management has to understand and deal with the twin ideas that problems do exist in this Agency in the secretarial field and those problems are solvable. In and of itself, the PMCD study is an important first step in facing up to these problems and dealing with them. Hopefully, the comments PMCD has sought on its survey will take us another step down a path that must be followed. In some ways, our most important message is that while we may have less than perfect knowledge (as often is the case in life), we (i.e., this Agency) have to act. In doing so, we all have to recognize that each directorate has its own idiosyncracies, and will have its own solutions we ought to encourage and understand.

4. We found this review and comment activity very worthwhile and we think the entire Directorate benefited from the opportunity to read, consider and comment on the PMCD Study. We

hope our response is helpful to you. If there is more we can do to assist you on this important subject, please call and let us know.

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Attachments:

1. Recommendations on the 1984 PMCD
Secretarial Study
2. Additional Comments

Attachment 1

Directorate of Intelligence Recommendations on the 1984
PMCD Secretarial Study

These recommendations relate to the PMCD study itself and to the question of what steps (if any) this Agency takes as a result of the study. These recommendations are that:

GENERAL:

- PMCD, when forwarding its documents to the Director, make it clear that the Directorate of Intelligence believes very strongly that this Agency does have a secretarial problem consisting of at least the two parts cited in the study: their role in the Agency, including the views of senior officers towards secretaries, and the secretaries' pay. Moreover, this Directorate believes our problem is solvable in part now.
- PMCD partially reorganize the study, and especially the recommendations, into more readable and easily understood form and text. A revised set of recommendations could sequentially address more of the secretarial problem in its entirety: recruitment, hiring, placement, training, promotions, career development, reassignment, and separation.

REGARDING THE PMCD RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Agency management at all levels accept the revised PMCD study as a useful step forward and act upon the recommendations that deal with:
 - o attitudes (#1)
 - o use of secretaries (#2)
 - o training, i.e., with managerial training in the use and treatment of secretaries. OTE's program of upgraded secretarial training should be implemented (#6)
- Agency management should immediately implement Option 1 of Recommendation 9, recognizing and accepting that this action

is an interim step only, not a long-term solution in itself. See additional DI Task Force recommendations on pay below.

-- Agency management not implement PMCD recommendations 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9, as presented. For DI Task Force alternatives to these recommendations, please see below.

- o In lieu of establishing secretarial development at the Directorate level (#3), we recommend a study of the potential costs and benefits of an Agency-wide or Directorate-level secretarial career service.
- o Rather than discourage the use of shorthand (#4, #5), recognize that DI managers find a combination of skills, including shorthand, advantageous in an office environment. DI managers still covet shorthand skills and do not perceive them to be a dying art. Further, it is not necessary to reaffirm that shorthand is no longer a requirement for advancement or promotion in the secretarial profession. This ruling is enforced already Agency wide.
- o Instead of advising Agency secretaries that their salaries are in the top ten percent of salaries in the Washington area (#7), acknowledge that PMCD's study is flawed in that the data in the study do not support the conclusions. Moreover, the wage comparability portion of the study does not present an accurate picture of the issue. Critical factors, such as benefits, security clearances, and quality and quantity of work must be included in any meaningful wage comparability study.
- o Rather than reevaluating all secretarial positions on an individual basis (#8), we recommend that the Agency's efforts be directed toward the development of a broader secretarial career development program.
- o Instead of creating an Agency Task Force to implement the banding pay system (#9, Option 2), we recommend that that Task Force start from ground level zero to develop a new secretarial pay system. While Option 2 appears innovative and attractive, PMCD's description of it raises more questions than are answered. It does not guarantee any relief from grade compression, and may result in more dissatisfaction than currently exists. Option 3 is the most popular with the DI secretarial corps, and could be implemented relatively easily, per our discussion with the Comptroller. However, the DI Task Force opinion is that this option does not provide the appropriate long-term commitment toward career development for our secretaries. Furthermore, the Task Force cannot wholeheartedly

endorse Option 4 without more specifics as to its implementation.

ALTERNATE DI RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Senior Agency management recognize that the issue of secretarial career management is one which needs to be addressed in its entirety and not simply as an issue of two pieces: attitudes and pay. To do this we recommend that an Agency task force, supplemented as appropriate by an outside contractor(s), be directed to:
 - o Study the whole issue--recruitment, hiring, placement, training, promotion, career development, reassignment and separation--and make recommendations for improvements.
 - o Study the potential value of a secretarial career service, either at the Directorate level or on an Agency-wide basis. In doing this, the work should include input from a representative sample of secretaries with at least five years' Agency service.
 - o Conduct the research and analysis necessary to develop and put into use a new pay system for secretaries. This new system should separate the grade of a secretary from that of the supervisor and assign grade and pay primarily according to a secretary's actual duties and on-the-job skills. Some attractive features of such a system are already contained in Options 2 and 4.
 - o Devise a plan to implement the results of this effort.
- As examples of management support for the secretarial profession:
 - o Initiate a Secretarial Bonus Program, for all secretaries, which would quickly replace the Secretary of the Year Award Program. Such a program would be an extension of the search for excellence and would encourage consistently high performance from the secretaries. More than that, it would afford managers a regular opportunity to reward more of our secretaries for their outstanding, and often unheralded, support during the year.
 - o Establish for secretaries an Agency-wide Dictation and Shorthand Incentive Program to both encourage achievement and maintenance of proficiency in dictation and shorthand and to reward on-the-job use of these skills.

Attachment 2

Directorate of Intelligence
Additional Comments on the 1984 PMCD Secretarial Study

Overview

We commend this effort by PMCD, the latest in a series of studies and surveys on secretaries and their careers. While any study will have some weaknesses, we recognize and agree with PMCD that this Agency has problems with secretarial career development and that they are solvable through wise action. Some steps are ready to act upon and should be taken now (e.g., Option 1), and others should be studied on an Agency-wide basis before any decisions are made.

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We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the survey and value highly the willingness and forthrightness of [redacted] and [redacted] to engage us in dialogue on it. Our comments below address the key features of the study--the survey and the recommendations.

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Response to Survey

Notwithstanding our generally positive sentiments about the survey, it does have some problems which must be addressed. In general, the report's weaknesses center on faulty methodology, unconvincing analysis, several seemingly undocumented assertions, and missing data. For a full treatment of these problems, please see the annex to this attachment. As a result, we take exception to some of the conclusions and, therefore, some of the recommendations offered up by the survey.

At the same time, however, we should note that our own survey, consisting of comments from managers and secretaries throughout the Directorate of Intelligence, has revealed several of the same problems and issues that the survey surfaced. In our view, we must not allow imperfections of the survey to interfere with moving forward on some of these issues.

The PMCD Recommendations

The nine PMCD recommendations are of uneven quality, are jumbled together, but do usefully address three primary issues: attitudes toward the secretarial profession, career development, and pay/wages.

Attitudes

Recommendations 1, 2, and 6 challenge managers to develop, fully utilize and recognize the potential of secretaries. The fact that most secretaries feel that they are left out of the team effort or are not contributing to the mission of an office is a serious management problem and one that is frequently raised by other "support employees." Its solution will require efforts by both managers and secretaries to improve communications, to approach office projects as a management team and to recognize initiative, imagination, special skills and dedication.

There is universal acceptance of Recommendation 1 that Agency managers and supervisors be made aware that secretaries are considered professional employees and should be treated as such. This message of professionalism, however, is not getting across to our secretaries--if we accept the survey results. More importantly, what is lacking from PMCD's recommendation are some concrete proposals on how to achieve the goal. Recommendations 2 and 6 are interconnected, involving the techniques on secretarial utilization in management courses.

One concern raised by DI managers is the use of the term "substantive." It may have a more unique usage in this Directorate than in others. In the DI, substantive work is equated with analysis. Some people thought that PMCD was suggesting we involve secretaries in work of an analytic nature.

Very strong support for Recommendation 6 exists in the DI. Each directorate should work with OT&E to develop and incorporate into management courses some workshops that promote manager/secretary teams, teach how to successfully delegate responsibilities to secretaries, and instruct in other steps to broaden the role of the secretary in the office.

PMCD's recommendations do attempt to get at the issue of the attitudes of managers toward secretaries, but they do not directly address the fact that these attitudes are not confined to managers but spill over to analysts, as well. While the biases and managerial attitudes noted in the survey do contribute to a lack of Agency recognition of the secretaries' professionalism and vital role, they, sadly, often originate in our educational system where the secretarial profession is no longer encouraged and young women are counseled to avoid the profession. Many people educated in this academic environment bring these prejudices with them when they enter the work place. Within the DI many more complaints are registered by our

secretaries against the treatment of them by analysts than by managers. We applaud OTE's effort to work some concepts on how to utilize and treat secretaries into analytic courses.

Career Development

Our review revealed a reasonably confusing response to Recommendation 3 that secretarial development, including counseling, training, and awards review should be established at the directorate level. Most managers recognize that to do this effectively, the equivalent of a secretarial career service panel would have to be created. However, among the secretaries there is an overwhelming concern that their career progression not be taken out of the hands of their immediate supervisors. More evaluation should be done to determine the costs and benefits of such a career service to the Agency and to the secretaries. There is no confusion, however, that counseling and awards review need to be done better.

There is universal support for more and better secretarial training. Even so, there is some concern about just what the survey results imply when training is the subject. In developing a well conceived and aggressive approach to secretarial training, we must ascertain what kind of person is actually occupying our secretarial positions. When secretaries speak of training, are they referring more to education to assist them in transferring to a different career field or for secretarial career development?

Recommendations 4 and 5 question the utility of shorthand and the requirement for it for advancement and promotion, as well as suggest that managers and supervisors use tools other than shorthand. We recognize that fewer and fewer secretaries have shorthand skills and that managers should be encouraged to use other tools; however, DI managers still covet shorthand skills and do not believe shorthand is a dying art. One suggestion to preserve shorthand skills is to treat them as we do language skills. In other words, create an incentive program to achieve the skills level required and then a maintenance program to pay people for maintaining those skills.

Pay/Wages

As should be obvious from our discussion of wage comparability (see annex), we strongly disagree with Recommendation 7 that Agency secretaries be made aware of the fact that their salaries are in the top ten percent in the Washington, D.C. area. Even PMCD's figures are not conclusive on that fact. In addition to pure salary, an effort should be made to include benefits, security clearances, and quality and quantity of work in any discussion of wage/compensation comparability.

We agree, in principle, with Recommendation 8 that secretarial positions should be evaluated on an individual basis

along with utilizing the secretarial grade pattern, and that whichever evaluation results in the higher grade should be accepted. One of the concerns in the DI is that secretaries presently are evaluated as secretaries regardless of the additional responsibilities they acquire.

A practice of redefining a job will allow us the flexibility to keep current as the role of the secretary changes. More and more ADP work is spilling over into the secretarial field and that trend is going to continue. Much discussion has already surfaced concerning the future role of secretaries in a more highly automated environment. There may be more of a need to reclassify current secretarial positions as word processing specialists or administrative/executive assistants. We are not convinced in the DI that PMCD actually expects or is planning to reclassify jobs on the basis of individual performance. We recommend instead that the Agency direct its efforts toward the development of a broad career management program for secretaries.

Recommendations 8 and 9 are confusing at best even though they are the heart of the study. We trust that only after PMCD evaluates all secretarial positions on an individual basis would a decision be made whether to continue using the Secretarial Grade Pattern. Our assumption is that PMCD planned to implement Recommendation 9 in the following sequence: (1) implement Option 1 which adds one level to the Secretarial Grade Pattern as an interim measure, (2) begin planning for the Secretary Pay Plan proposed in Option 2, and (3) abolish the Secretarial Grade Pattern.

The DI believes Option 1 should be implemented immediately. It provides some relief from the grade compression; it is relatively inexpensive; it is pragmatic, practical, and understandable. Option 1 should be used, however, only as a short-term fix.

In addition to implementing Option 1, there is overwhelming support for the modification of the secretarial grade pattern along the lines of Option 3, particularly in the DI secretarial ranks. It is the simplest, the most familiar, and the most popular. It relieves grade compression by moving 300 of those 900 secretaries at the GS-7 level into a higher grade category. While we appreciate the problems raised in exceeding the authorized average grade, we think Option 3 deserves some further exploration before saying it will not work. Barring any outside approval of such a plan, or a variant of it, what are some options available to the Agency to bear the costs internally? If PMCD has already looked into the options and found them lacking, they should say so. We have been told by the Comptroller that implementation of this option would be relatively easy. The Task Force opinion, however, is that Option 3 does not provide the long-term commitment we would like to see toward career development for our secretaries, nor would it prevent secretaries from becoming dead-ended in their field after a few years' experience.

The DI Task Force cannot, at this time, agree with Option 2, which calls for banding. While Option 2 is innovative and attractive, the description of it and its implementation are such that more questions are raised than are answered. It appears too complex, too lengthy to implement, cumbersome, a nightmare bureaucratically, and difficult to manage. It does not guarantee any relief from grade compression and may result in even more dissatisfaction than currently exists. This option is worth further exploration but definitely needs more explanation.

Likewise, the Task Force cannot wholeheartedly endorse Option 4 without more specifics as to its implementation. Clearly, our interest is in the development of a system which would evaluate a secretary, his/her position and his/her pay according to actual job duties and skills. It seems reasonable to us that such a system is in, or a variant of, Options 2 and 4. Another possibility would be a Secretarial Bonus Program.

The Task Force also recommends the creation of an annual Secretarial Bonus Program. As we envision it, such a program would not add points to our average grade, could be easily implemented, and would benefit secretaries at all levels. We envision this program replacing the Agency's Secretary of the Year Award Program.

Table 1

PMCD Secretarial Survey, 1984
Comparison of Sample Population

(Percent)

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Difference*</u>
13	0	0.1	- 0.1
12	1.0	0.2	+ 0.8
11	3.8	0.6	+ 3.2
10	2.9	0.6	+ 2.3
09	28.8	5.4	+23.4
08	24.0	9.4	+14.6
07	30.8	61.4	-30.6
06	8.6	22.4	-13.8

*A minus indicates that the sample underrepresents those at that GS grade in the actual Agency secretarial population. A plus indicates that the sample overrepresents those at a particular GS level.

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Annex

Specific Weaknesses

In considering the attitudinal survey itself, we identified several problems. PMCD claims on page 2 to have surveyed a representative sample of "104 Agency secretaries." The survey of these secretaries is not representative in any statistical sense of the word. The sample substantially underrepresents secretaries at GS-7 or lower and overrepresents those at GS-8 and above. See table (overleaf). In other words, far too few of those facing job compression were surveyed and far too many of those who have broken through the compression ceiling were included. The variations between the sample and the population are sufficiently large to lead one to question the representativeness of the views expressed. To believe that the sample is representative, we must assume that secretaries--regardless of GS rank--hold generally similar views. This may be true, but PMCD has, unfortunately, not included the breakouts of views expressed by grade needed to test that assumption. Without the responses by grade, we cannot tell whether all secretaries hold similar views or whether secretaries at some grades are more or less concerned about some issues than those at other grades.

Particular concern should be voiced, not dismissed as it is in the report, over the differential between Agency salaries and the firms dealing in professional services. The study concludes that "In general, Agency salaries at each grade level are competitive with firms paying in the upper ten percent of surveyed organizations." While "generally" true, a careful review of Appendix VI, in which this information is presented, suggests that the salaries are only in the top 25 percent for all categories of employees at the GS-5 level, about the top 15 percent for GS-6 and 7, and the top 10 percent for secretaries at GS-8 and above. What the wage comparability study does not address is whether grade compression in the private sector is as severe as it is for the Agency's GS-7 secretaries.

Secretaries are all too aware that this comparison is faulty. No mention is made of other benefits often offered in private industry, such as fully-paid health and dental coverage, bonus programs, extra leave benefits, cost-of-living expenses and day-care centers. It is interesting that secretaries in the DS&T, where contact and familiarity with the private sector ought to be the most common, are more dissatisfied with their salaries vis-a-vis the private sector than in any other directorate. It could be that they are simply more aware.

Moreover, PMCD's review of the survey's findings at times seems to say more to the reader than appears to have been in the questions. Consider the following two questions on promotions and experience.

- EODs promoted too quickly without comparable level of experience in the Agency. (43 agree, 18 disagree, 43 are uncertain)
- Interdirectorate promotion policy is inconsistent. (36 agree, 7 disagree, 61 are uncertain)

The report states on page 4 that "35 percent were aware of the varying directorate promotional policies and felt that promotions were based more on Washington area cost of living measures, coupled with satisfactory performance and time in grade, rather than on competitive evaluation factors." Unfortunately, no reference is made in the questions to promotion criteria beyond comparable level of experience. What shows in the report as the view of the respondents concerning cost of living measures, satisfactory performance, and competitive evaluation factors, appears to be pure dicta from PMCD. Moreover, 35-39 percent of those interviewed were uncertain about any of this.

Another undocumented assertion occurs during the presentation of various pay/grading options. PMCD indicates that it believes that many of the secretarial positions, if evaluated on their own merits, would result in grades lower than those called for by the secretarial grade patterns. But no evidence is presented anywhere in the report that either confirms or refutes this key observation.

An additional issue uncovered in our DI review, which did not make it into the PMCD survey, is that of recruitment and hiring of secretaries. It is impossible to tell from the data PMCD has gathered whether we are attracting the right people for our secretarial jobs. By recruiting for secretarial positions applicants with undergraduate degrees who can type, we may be guaranteeing ourselves a secretarial work force with a high degree of turnover and general dissatisfaction. Furthermore, many applicants without college degrees come into the Agency as secretaries merely to get their feet in the door. They do not want to be, or see themselves as, secretaries. As result, they end up either moving out of the field or unhappy because they cannot. It seems to us that part of the answer to resolving the discontent in the secretarial ranks has to be a look at recruiting and hiring.